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ABSTRACT

The first of the four papers in this symposium, "What Is It Like To Be an Independent HRD Consultant?" (Alexander Ardishvili), reports on a phenomenological study that investigated the experience of being an independent HRD (human resource development) consultant through interviews with 10 successful HRD consultants. The study identified eight themes: freedom, flexibility, and control over one's destiny, time, and income; enjoying work; learning and exploring a variety of new things; responsibility; embracing the tenuous nature of things and coping with uncertainty; marketing, partnering, and referrals; working long hours; and focus. "Virtual Learning Communities: Creating Meaning Through Dialogue and Inquiry in Cyberspace" (Judy Milton, Mike Davis, Karen E. Watkins) provides a qualitative analysis of the interactions that occurred within small groups in an asynchronous, web-based distance learning environment, with findings suggesting elements (presented as a model) that contributed to or hindered the development of these groups as learning communities. "Conducting Multilingual Qualitative Research in Human Resource Development: Implications for Validity and Reliability" (Maria Cseh) addresses the question of ensuring the validity and reliability of a qualitative study conducted in more than one language. "An Ethnographic Study of Cross-Cultural Impacts on Tutoring in an Organization" (Lori A. Petersen), portrays one organization's use of tutoring in the Japanese language of a midwestern white male by a Japanese female instructor. (KC)

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38 **Qualitative Studies in HRD**

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38-1 What It Is Like To Be An Independent HRD Consultant?

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What is it Like to be an Independent HRD Consultant?

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This phenomenological study investigated the experience of being an independent HRD consultant. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten successful HRD consultants. Eight themes emerged and are presented here: freedom, flexibility, and control over one's destiny, time, and income; enjoying one's work; learning and exploring a variety of new things; responsibility; embracing the tenuous nature of things and coping with uncertainty; marketing, partnering, and referrals; working long hours; and focus.

Keywords: Independent Consultant, Contracting, Human Resource Development

Recent trends in the U.S. business environment--re-engineering, outsourcing, elimination of multiple layers within business organizations--all lead to an increasing role for independent consultants and contract employees. Morrow (1993) wrote in his Time Magazine article: "America has entered the age of the contingent or temporary worker, of the consultant and subcontractor, of the just-in-time work force—fluid, flexible, and disposable" (p. 40). According to Pink (quoted in Carlson, 1997), the U.S. is entering a stage of a "Free Agent Nation," with 14 million self-employed, 8.3 million independent contractors, and 2.3 million employed by temporary agencies (p. E3).

The reasons for this change have been analyzed by Rifkin (1996) and Bridges (1994). Building on Zuboff's (1988) groundbreaking analysis of the current automation revolution and the way it changed the employment landscape, they argue that, among other things, the emergence of personal computers and communications technology improved personal productivity of knowledge workers, eliminated the time and space barriers, and made independent practice a reality for millions of people. There are also several other reasons for the increased use of independent contractors. A firm that is facing a turbulent, constantly changing environment (and today most sectors of the U.S. economy fall under this category) may derive substantial benefits from using contract workforce. First, this may reduce employment costs: external workers can be hired without increasing the cost of health insurance and benefits (Casey, 1989). Second, this reduces certain administrative costs, because independent contractors are responsible for planning and managing their own work (Belous, 1989). Third, contract workers can be hired without an expectation of long-term employment and can be let go without tarnishing the firm's image (Belous, 1989). Fourth, use of contractors can offer a firm a way to access highly specialized skills on an as needed basis for only a short period of time (Davis-Blake and Uzzi, 1993). Belous (1989) reported that using independent contractors allowed firms in a number of industries to offer a wide range of products without a large and risky investment in expensive permanent labor.

As for the use of HRD contractors, in recent years HRD has become one of the most outsourced of corporate functions. A 1997 overview of corporate HRD trends (Bassi, Cheney, & Van Buren, 1997) called outsourcing HRD the "growth industry of the nineties" (p. 52). The authors indicated that, though outsourcing all training is rare (3% of firms surveyed by the Manufacturing Alliance in 1996), most companies (83%) were outsourcing at least some training (p. 53). Oberle (1989) pointed out that some organizations have been using contract trainers for years. Consulting firms like Kepner-Tregoe, for example, have employed them to deliver their programs since the early 1960s. However, in the 1980s this trend became much more visible: a survey by the Administrative Management Society revealed that 90% of respondents used temporary employees during the previous year (Oberle, 1989, p. 57). Oberle (1989) indicated that one place where temporary workers can be especially helpful is in training departments in firms where training needs can rise and fall quickly. Contract trainers are beneficial to companies because firms save money by avoiding paying for full-time workers in slow times.

The above overview suggests that many HRD practitioners are likely to face the transition from the role of corporate training professional to that of outside consultant. Hence, there is a need for better understanding of this phenomenon. However, most of books and articles on the topic of independent consulting either provide practical advice to consultants (Cook, 1996; Cohen, 1990; Shenson, 1990), or describe competencies of HRD consultants (Eisen, Steele, & Cherbeneau, 1995; French & Bell, 1990). In my literature review, only a handful of sources described independent consulting as a way of being, explored the existential aspects of this phenomenon (Bellman, 1990; Block, 1993; Harrison, 1995). And of these, only one was based on a research study as opposed to the author's own experiences (Bianco-Mathis & Veazey, 1996).

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To close this gap, and to provide a broader understanding of the existential aspects of the independent HRD consulting phenomenon, the following research question was placed at the center of the present study: What is it like to be an independent HRD consultant?

Research Methodology

This study was based on *hermeneutic phenomenological research methodology*. A research methodology should derive from the question to be investigated. In the 1980s and the early 1990s, the debate between the proponents of the positivistic and interpretive paradigms in vocational education research demonstrated that there is more than one way in which to conceptualize and conduct educational research (Hultgren, 1989). Among other things, an outcome of the above theoretical discussion was the research community's acceptance of the notion that, when a study involves gaining an understanding of human experiences, one of the interpretive research methodologies would be more appropriate than a positivistic methodology. In essence, the differences between the interpretive paradigm and its counterpart, the positivistic paradigm, boil down to differences in their ontological assumptions. The ontological position of the interpretive paradigm can be characterized by the centrality of the idea of reflective, meaning-based interpretations of the world which human beings inhabit. This meaning-making activity is central to any conscious human activity because there is no "pristine, unmediated grasp of the world as it is" (Eisner, 1991, p. 46). The interpretive paradigm postulates that we do not have direct access to a singular and fully knowable external reality. All of our understandings, instead, are contextually embedded and interpersonally created. Thus, we are constantly trying to make sense of phenomena and strive to construct the reality from varied and ever-changing interpretations (Weick, 1993). There are two major ontological implications of the above characteristics of the interpretive paradigm. First, reality is plural, not singular. Since each individual is constructing his or her own meaning of reality, this subjective construction process will result in personalized, individual realities. The second implication of the interpretive ontology relates to the concept of the person's existence. In positivistic ontology, there is a one-way, direct relationship: the reality shapes the individual. In the interpretive paradigm, reality is actively shaped by the individual.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is both descriptive and interpretive (because any facts of lived experience are always already meaningfully experienced) (van Manen, 1996). In hermeneutic phenomenology the understanding of the lifeworld of a person emerges from the interpretation of texts and/or conversations with the person whose lifeworld is studied (Clifford, 1988). As a practical method of gathering narratives, I used conversational interviewing (van Manen, 1990) in which the researcher is a conversation partner with insiders, persons with lived experience of the phenomenon being studied. This method requires inductive work, creating a picture out of the analysis of the narratives rather than setting out to prove hypotheses.

Participants

I interviewed ten volunteers from my pool of contacts through the University of Minnesota's HRD department and through my job. The participants' ages ranged from 36 to 50 years. The interviewees had varying lengths of consulting experience, from veterans with more then 10 years in HRD consulting to those who had started within the last two years. The consultants represented various areas of HRD: organization development (OD), training design and development, standup training, and evaluation research. All participants were at the time of the interviews independent contractors: working on their own (as opposed to being a part of a larger consulting organization), and doing consulting as their major job (as opposed to providing consulting services in addition to some other full-time job).

The Researcher

Knowledge of the researcher background helps the readers of an interpretive study understand better the interpretations made. I have about 17 years of HRD and management education and research experience, including several years of managing needs assessment projects, job task analysis, program design, and training development. My experience as an independent consultant includes contract development of computer-based training programs, management consulting to emerging companies, and subcontracting with an expatriate management training firm. In my research, I assume that jobs and their characteristics are social constructs created by the interpretations of individual participants in the work processes, who actively create the reality they inhabit and share a common frame of reference (Gioia & Poole, 1986). Therefore, in order to understand what kind of work relationships will be created by people, we need to understand how they experience their surroundings and daily lives in terms of time, space, their own being, and their relationships with other people and the surrounding environment.

Interviews

Individual interviews (ranging from 60 to 90 minutes in length) were conducted with each participant. All ten interviews were tape recorded. There was an interview guide which I utilized during the first round of interviews. The guide included four questions. First, there was a general question about the participant's background: How did you become an independent consultant? If asked to elaborate, I added that I was looking for information on their previous work experience, and the events that lead them to become what they are now. The second question was formulated as follows: What do you do? Describe your actions during a typical project, a selected moment in your practice, or a memorable event that happened to you. My third question was: What does being an independent consultant mean to you? Question four was open-ended: Do you have any other observations to make that would help me understand what it is like to be an independent consultant? What advice would you provide to a person who is contemplating an independent consulting career?

Text Analysis

The tape recordings of the conversations were transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed by focusing on themes that emerged throughout the conversation. Essential themes, according to van Manen (1990), are "aspects or essential qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon cannot be what it is" (p. 107). The interview texts were analyzed utilizing the selective or highlighting method proposed by van Manen (1990): "In the selective reading approach we listen to or read a text several times and ask, What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described? These statements we then circle, underline, or highlight." (p. 93) Next, I developed a "mind map" for each of the interviews (Buzan, 1991). Major themes that emerged from the analysis were color coded both on the interview transcripts and on the "mind maps." Further, I created a composite "mind map" for the whole group and a master list of themes. Finally, I began writing about the themes. During this process I was constantly referring to "mind maps" and transcripts. In the process of writing, changes were introduced into the themes several times, due to re-conceptualizing and combining. The preliminary results of the analysis were validated by sharing a summary of emerging themes and metaphors with the interview participants and soliciting their comments during the follow-up phone calls or meetings.

Themes

My analysis produced eight themes: freedom, flexibility, and control over one's destiny, time and income; enjoying one's work; learning and exploring a variety of new things; responsibility; embracing the tenuous nature of things and coping with uncertainty; the relation between marketing, partnering, and referrals; focus; working long hours.

Freedom, Flexibility, and Control over One's Destiny, Time, and Income

The common thread for this theme was consultants' greater ability (compared to corporate employees) to utilize their talents, expertise, and time available in achieving their life goals. These goals are different for everybody (and they change as a person progresses through the life stages): it might be personal, spiritual, or professional growth, ability to provide an adequate lifestyle for their family, or enough parental attention for their children. It seems that independence from a corporate structure provides significant advantages in achieving the above goals. These advantages come at a cost, however: life is less predictable, and income levels might fluctuate significantly. Therefore, a realistic assessment of one's goals and means is necessary. Control over one's destiny was important to all of the participants, but for a variety of reasons. In addition to the opportunity for self-actualization that this control brings with it, there are two other important aspects: flexibility with time and income. For some, flexibility with time results in higher income potential, allowing consultants to be more productive: "I am more valuable thinking in the morning than in the afternoon: I can have twice as much done if I work in the morning. So I developed a schedule allocating mornings for certain kinds of work, and afternoons for meetings, because my clock tends to work that way."

Enjoying One's Work

This theme could be found virtually in all of the interviews. One of the participants said about stand-up training:

> "I do it naturally; once I am into it, I feel in complete control; I can go for 10 hours, and I don't realize how the 10 hours have gone by. I wish I had fifteen hours. I enjoy it tremendously, and I am good at it."

Ideally, anybody should enjoy their work, both the self-employed and corporate employees. However, it seems that, for independent contractors, enjoying their work is even more important:

> ...when you are self-employed, you have to be in the realm of doing something your heart is into; otherwise, this is not going to work. If you are a plumber, but you hate plumbing, you are better off being employed by somebody than you are being on your own. You have to find some way to express that art, whether that will be going back to school, practicing art on the side, and so forth. Following your calling and finding work that is more fulfilling to you, you always have to be enjoying what you are doing. Otherwise, it's not worth it on the other end. All this hassle.

Learning and Exploring a Variety of New Things

Continuous learning and exploring new things is important for two reasons: in this constantly changing business environment, it is necessary to keep one's skills up-to-date; and learning seems to have an intrinsic value for most of the consultants interviewed by me, constituting an important part of the personal growth journey. Further, independent consulting, as opposed to highly specialized and compartmentalized corporate jobs, provides an opportunity for becoming a more rounded individual. This is achieved not only through structured learning, but through on-the-job acquisition of new skills, trying out new approaches and methods. My conversation partners pointed out that the nature of projects they work on is different from the corporate environment in one additional, important aspect; it has more variety. Working at a corporation, we see, most often, only parts of the complete picture. Independent consultants, on the other hand, are most often hired to deliver a complete, finished product, for example, to prepare and conduct a complete training program. As one of the participants put it: "I am enjoying it so much, mostly because it is so varied. I am doing design and project management. I develop a concept, script, the look of the project, where we need graphics, videos, write video scripts. I work with instructional designers and manage the project." She also associated the ability to do a variety of things with being a more rounded individual: "From the career perspective, what I like about it is that I am much more rounded, if you will." Further, participants pointed out that independent consulting work brings freedom to work on those aspects of one's profession that have been out of reach at a corporation. At a business company, given today's specialization and compartmentalization, it is hard to find a job that would allow someone enough flexibility to try their skills in all the different aspects of their profession. As one of the participants said: "I wanted to expand my horizon; my last employer focused on multimedia, but I wanted to do a variety of training projects. I actually wanted to do needs assessment and other aspects of training development."

Responsibility

Since a consultant is working mostly alone, she is ultimately responsible for the success of the project and for her own success as a professional. There is also a more direct, more visible link between her day-to-day actions and her income, health, and ability to retire comfortably. This responsibility can be a heavy burden, especially because one realizes that there is nobody else there to blame for mistakes. One of the participants put it this way:

> Nothing is set for you, nothing is pre-determined: your retirement package, your insurance, how much money you are going to make, how much time you are going to take off this year, what your rate is, what you have to do, what your assignment is. You have to get your assignment; you have to stir the pot to get it. If you want to change what you do, you have to change it yourself; you cannot go to someone else and say, "Hey, I want to change this, I don't want to do this job anymore, I want to do that job." Everything becomes your own responsibility: get your own cards, send your own invoices, call your own debts in.

Another interviewee stressed an additional aspect of the responsibility issue: "You have to be able to accept responsibility--there is nobody else there to take the blame." And one more excerpt: "... at a job you might be able

to share responsibility with somebody. Here you are alone. I could hire somebody to help me out, but I am a perfectionist, so it does not always work. And you have to do a lot yourself—even making copies, for example."

Embracing the Tenuous Nature of Things and Coping with Uncertainty

A realization that they have to face uncertainty and they have to face it alone comes to independent contractors early on:

> The downside is that you never really know what the future is going to hold. My luck has been holding out, but I often wonder if I went to a bank and applied for a loan, and they looked at my calendar, that after three or four months it would look like I am unemployed...it's not an overwhelming stress by any means, but it's always there. You are always conscious of the fact that you need to make sure that you are booked. It would be nice not to worry about that.

The first recipe for coping with uncertainty is to fully accept it as a part of being self-employed and stop worrying about it:

> You also have to deal with the possibility that this all can come tumbling down one day. You can lose your clients, and you can be badly underemployed. It's been helpful to me to embrace, very actively embrace, the very tenuous nature of everything that happens, of the temporary employment. If all of a sudden I walk into my client, and they tell me: "On Monday you are fired," I will say: "OK, I am fired. What's next? We will figure out something else."

The second recipe is to develop a contingency plan for the periods when the business is slow: this will not only allow consultants to be better prepared for unexpected downturns but, more importantly, will provide them with greater piece of mind and ability to concentrate during the busy periods. One of my conversation partners offered the following advice:

> If you are going to be self-employed, have a back-up plan. Say, "if I will not be able to find any work, let's say within three months, I am going to..." – fill in the blank. Paint houses, get temporary work, do something, because if you go some time without having worked, you can find yourself being emotionally affected by this. So you need to figure out how you are going to handle those down periods.

Marketing, Partnering, and Referrals

It was clear from the texts that, at the initial stages of the independent consulting career, marketing was one of the major concerns for all participants. Many indicated that they were concerned with this issue long before they went off on their own. Will I be good at marketing? How much cold calling will I have to make? How can I prepare myself to be a better marketer? These are the questions most of my conversation partners have been asking themselves. If marketing is understood narrowly as selling and using direct selling techniques (mailing, "cold" calls, etc.), then marketing skills are not an absolute necessity for an independent consultant. However, as my interviewees pointed out, marketing should be understood in a much broader sense; as developing a strategy for promoting oneself and exploring a variety of ways for reaching the target population. Using this broader definition of marketing, consultants have multiple tools for achieving their marketing goals: partnering with other providers of similar services; networking with peers and exchange of referrals with them; networking with former employers and customers; partnering with providers of complementary services (accounting, computer support, printing, etc.).

Partnering with peers and providers of complementary services is important for two reasons: as a source of referrals, and as a substitute for corporate support structures. Reciprocal exchange of services, advice, and moral support that this partnering generates plays an important role for an independent consultant who might, otherwise, feel isolated and resource-deficient. As one of the participants has put it:

> Most of the people in my position—single operators, small operators-- you get a few contacts, and then those contacts lead to other contacts. Not a lot of cold calling is going on, sending out brochures, and this kind of thing. Networking seems to be a much more powerful method than cold calling. And networking not only with clients, but with other providers in your position.

For most of my conversation partners, networking with other consultants was as important as maintaining a network of former and prospective customers. Networking with peers can be an important source of work:

> There seems to be enough diversity in business that people refer each other—"not me, but, maybe, her." And once you get this referral, being able to back it up by sending good materials. It is always very impressive when people can shoot out materials right after the initial phone conversation. "Here is a little bit about me, here is a newsletter." And this goes back to what we talked about earlier, having a target in mind.

Working Long Hours

Having flexibility with one's time does not mean having more free time. In fact, most participants stressed that they work longer hours than they used to work at their corporate jobs. The reason seems to be the necessity to do additional, mostly administrative, tasks, which, at corporations, are centralized and taken care of by support staff:

> "These things in a way can be sometimes perceived as negatives; when I can work, if I am busy doing everything but working. Copies made; I have a copy machine at home, but it's very slow' so if I need to have a 100 copies made, I go to Kinko's."

One of the interviewees stressed that he works longer hours but still believes that it is better than at a corporate job: "In the long run I probably end up working more that way, I work more hours, but it seems like I am working much less, because it's all flexible." Still another interviewee talked about two separate times a consultant needs: long chunks of uninterrupted time to work on projects, and additional time during the day or, possibly, night, to take care of the administrative and support functions:

> I put in an average of six hours every day where I work steadily. And then I do other things: I do the translations, I do the preparation of the development materials. I worked until 3:15 a.m. last night, but that was a rare one. I usually work until one o'clock at night every night. And it doesn't end. I do dinner with my wife, and we go for a walk, and then I go back to work.

Focus

The issue of focus versus diversity in one's job was discussed by many of my conversation partners. The consensus seems to be that you need to focus on certain aspects of your profession, on certain areas. Focus is important for a variety of reasons. First, customers prefer to deal with somebody who is an expert in something. And this something needs to be easily recognizable and tangible. Here is an excellent explanation of this:

> In the marketplace you will be hired to do a "thing." And so you have to define what a 'thing' is. And in the area of training and development design is a "thing," writing is a "thing," research is a "thing," stand-up instruction is a "thing." These are finite, discrete areas where somebody may say, we need somebody to write this, we need somebody to teach this, we need somebody to evaluate this. Management is not a "thing"—people are not going to hire you to manage anything, people skills is not a "thing"—it's nice to have, but nobody will hire you for just being a people's person, and so you have to recognize a half a dozen things that you are going to be hired for.

Another interviewee believes that, besides the credentials issue, focus is important for one additional reason: professional growth. She said:

> Be focused on what you do. I, for example, focus on training and development, and specifically on multimedia. Don't try to be all things to all people; you will spread yourself too thin. Also, focusing is important for your professional development. I try to do this yearly—learn new skills. I don't know how you can do that if you don't have focus. Think why you are doing it, and what your expertise is, what your focus is going to be.

Implications for Practitioners

The goal of an interpretive study is not to make generalizable conclusions. The implications in this section are observations based on specific experiences of a group of people. Experiences of another group of consultants may be different. Therefore, my goal is not to provide an advice on how to solve similar problems in any other settings. Rather, I attempt to draw the readers' attention to the existence of certain issues, and urge them to ask their own questions within their concrete situations.

The study findings should be of interest to both the independent HRD consultants and the corporate HRD executives and managers who utilize contract employees on various projects. *Independent HRD consultants* might find it beneficial to review their own lives and work, trying to identify some dominant or guiding themes. Comparing these themes to those identified in this study could provide them with important insights and food for thought. Also, it could be beneficial to talk to their colleagues, to discuss these themes at informal meetings of consultants' interest groups, to gain collective insights into the specificity of their practice and lives.

Given the widespread use of independent consultants by HRD departments of many U.S. corporations, the ability to manage these contractual relationships becomes an important skill for any *HRD executive*. And this ability depends, in large part, on an executive's understanding of contractors' motivations, lifestyles, and modes of operation. For example, do these consultants follow a focus strategy, or are they equally good at several things? Do they have strong self-discipline? Do they prefer to work from home, or will they want to work at the client's location? Answers to these questions should provide an employer with information to assist in deciding whether there is a good match between a consultant's style and the organization's preferences. To obtain the above information, an employer could conduct interviews with prospective consulting service providers asking open-ended questions to solicit descriptions of past projects. These descriptions are much more informative in this case than evaluative statements.

Future Research Directions

The following future research directions can be suggested based on the study findings: studying consultants' networks; contrasting characteristics of an "organization person" with those of an independent contractor; and exploring the continuous learning aspect of consultants' lives.

Consultants' Networks

From the study interviews it became clear that partnering, networking, and referrals have a central importance for independent consultants, facilitating achieving the project goals and also providing a viable substitute for marketing and selling. This whole area deserves further examination. Among some questions to ask about this phenomenon are: What are the foundations and mechanism of partnering? Which partnering/networking arrangements work the best? Theoretical foundations for the proposed investigation can be found in the network analysis and theories of social exchange (Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Jarillo, 1986). Network analysis considers both the structure and the process of relationships that join individuals, groups, and organizations. The network model assumes that actors are not atomistic but exist within complex systems of other actors. It also assumes that economic institutions are socially constructed and influenced by the history and structures of personal relations and networks of such relations (Ben-Porath, 1980). The network perspective research focuses on describing networks of relationships in terms of their size (number of participants), density (a network where everybody knows each other has a high density), and distance (the number of persons a focal person has to contact to reach a specific person in a network). The same principles that are applied to the study of firm networks could be utilized in studying consultants' networks. Partnering and informal exchange arrangements described in this study can be viewed as networks, and their density, distance, and size can be analyzed. Further, the level of trust in informal exchanges of information and resources could be determined.

Contrasting the Characteristics of an Organization Person and Those of a Consultant. My study suggested that such characteristics of their lives and work as freedom and flexibility; control over one's destiny, time and income; and enjoying one's work are important for this group of independent consultants. However, it is not clear whether these preferences are unique to this group and whether they differentiate independent consultants from corporate employees. White (1956) analyzed characteristics of an "organization person," contrasting them with qualities of an independent artisan of the earlier years, and discussed a number of themes that, in his opinion, were descriptive of an "organization person's" life. Among these themes are: a quest for belonginness; a need for

security; striving for "good life" offered by corporate jobs; an ability to do something worthwhile. Knowledge of differences between the organization people and the independents may provide corporate executives and managers with a better ability to manage these groups, especially in situations when representatives of both groups work on the same projects. A whole set of questions could be asked about the difference between the "organization person" and an independent consultant. If it is true that the "organization person" strives for belonging and security, can it be that for those who opt for an independent life these attributes are not important? Further, if for both groups it is important to have an opportunity to do something worthwhile, than how do they define "worthwhile"? How different are these definitions for the two groups? Finally, if independent contractors leave their corporate jobs because of the conflict between their individual growth goals and the demands of the formal organization, can we identify specific characteristics of those who are more apt to abandon the formal structures? Can we learn more about the processes that lead to this decision, and about the amount of time this transition takes?

Lifelong Learning. Commitment to continuous learning was identified as an important theme both in my study and in the reviewed literature. Vaill (1991) pointed out that in today's rapidly changing environment lifelong learning should become a way of being for any professional. In a corporate environment, education and training are often part of a company's human resource development strategy. Therefore, many corporate learners participate in structured and managed continuous learning experiences. This is very different for independent consultants. They have to develop their own learning strategies, choose subjects to study, select learning methods, and determine how much time and money they should allocate to their education and development. An independent consultant matches the definition of self-directed learner proposed by Vaill (1991): a self-directed learner is a person "...having substantial control over the purposes, content, form, and pace of learning" (p. 59). To assist independent consultants in developing and implementing their self-directed learning strategies, we would need to learn more about their preferred learning styles, readiness for self-directed learning, and perceived value of the learning investment compared to other possible uses of their time.

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Virtual Learning Communities: Creating Meaning through Dialogue and Inquiry in Cyberspace

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This paper provides a qualitative analysis of the interactions that occurred within small groups in an asynchronous, web-based distance learning environment. Within the context of a graduate HRD course, students used action science tools of dialogue and inquiry to explore work-related issues. The findings suggest elements, presented as a model for further research, that contributed to or hindered the development of these groups as learning communities.

Keywords: Action Science, Learning Communities, Web-based Learning

Generative learning is a necessary component of the learning organization (Senge, 1990) and a vital part of the knowledge building process. The challenge is to develop organizations that are able to incorporate this process into their systems, creating the capacity for people to develop and add value to the organization. With knowledge becoming the basis of our economy (Stewart, 1997), effort toward developing intellectual capital as a tangible asset is being recognized in organizations that are adapting to the new realities. Collaborative work and learning environments are necessary to support generative learning.

Learning communities are learning environments premised on people sharing a set of common issues or problems and having the desire to learn ways to address them. Differing from the traditional ways in which teaching and training are often delivered, learning communities focus on the collaborative efforts of participants to build knowledge and develop skills through practice and to reflect on the knowledge they have constructed. Within both academic and corporate organizations, HRD professionals are working to adapt their methods to support communities of learners.

Technology is becoming an integral part of the collaborative work and learning effort in organizations, often creating virtual groups functioning across time and distance. Collaborative technologies (Roschelle, 1996), such as groupware, provide a dynamic process to support people in sharing experience through dialogue, inquiry, and "mutual knowledge" creation for the construction of "shared resolutions" to ill-defined problems (Schön, 1983). This type of technology helps to translate virtual groups into virtual learning communities, offering both a means and a solution for sharing experiences, building and capturing group knowledge, and improving performance in a distance environment.

The purpose of this research has been to explore the core dimensions that describe learning communities in a virtual environment and identify the important elements that contribute to or hinder the development of them. This paper offers a model of virtual learning communities developed after examining the interactions of the participants for evidence of team learning and collaborative knowing, exploring the group dynamics exhibited in the virtual environment, and identifying the meaningful factors evident in these processes.

Framework of the Study

In the fall of 1998, the predominately experiential graduate level course, "Cross Cultural Perspectives on Reflective Technologies in Work-based Learning", was taught jointly by The University of Georgia and the University of Manchester. The purpose of the course was to create a working laboratory using T-group experiences and action science case work to explore interpersonal competence, to facilitate group learning, and to begin to conceptualize how individuals and organizations can be changed by confronting and transforming defensive routines.

The course was designed with one week of intensive face-to-face (F2F) sessions, held in Manchester in October, followed by seven weeks of small group case work on the World Wide Web. Participants built on the

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T-group experiences of the first half of the week with work in small groups on their own cases of problematic work -related interactions during the second part of the week. This F2F experience formed the basis of the distance component. The course involved students and professors from different cultures who had varying degrees of knowledge about the course content and methods of delivery, as well as diverse personal work experience. Some of the participants at the University of Georgia did know each other from previous classes, but for most this course served as the introduction to each other as well as the course content. There were 15 students from the two universities: 8 women and 2 men from the United States, 1 man from Jamaica, 1 woman from Malaysia, 1 woman from Holland, 1 man from Libya, and 1man from Botswana participating in the course. The UK lecturer and his British female research assistant were participants in the on-line casework. The action science casework was facilitated by one female and one male professor from the United States. Participants were assigned to small groups for the action science case work following the T-group sessions in Manchester, with an effort to achieve diversity based on gender, and nationality, confidence and skill. The three groups were formed.

Presenting action science cases in the second part of the face-to-face component provided preparation for the work that would be the focus of the distance portion of the course. Working as small groups on the web, the learners used the action science tools of inquiry and dialogue to address issues in their own individual case studies. Each group member presented his or her own action science case for discussion for a one-week period. A group mapping session and a week of final discussion concluded the course for a total of 7 weeks of on-line work. Participants worked both asynchronously and synchronously on the web during this time. At the mid-point and end of the course there were synchronous meetings of the entire class on the web.

Theoretical Framework

Virtual learning communities offer a new way to integrate work and learning. They strive to provide active learning opportunities linked to real-world experiences in which the learning can be defined as the activity through which new collective knowledge is built by its members for itself as a system (Kasl, Marsick, & Dechant, 1997). The conceptual framework of this paper is based on these three related areas of research: action science theory (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985; Brooks & Watkins, 1994); situated learning (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989); and, the dynamics of team learning (Kasl et al.).

Action Science

Action Science was both the substance and the methodology of the CMC component of this course. As the technology practiced during the course, action science has been described as the science of interpersonal action, and is *"centrally concerned with the practice of intervention"* (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985, p. 35) into frequently mismatched espoused theories and theories-in-use.

Development of skill in action science is to develop reflective capacity, not only reflection-on-action, but also reflection on reflection-in-action. This can be achieved by making theories of action explicit, through the presentation and inquiry into case studies. As such, action science is located in the real world of the students' experience. What is of greatest value is access to and participation in knowledge situated in practice, and the basic unit of support is the small group that serves as a valuable resource in learning.

Situated Learning

Theories of social constructivism and situated knowledge (Brown & Duguid, 1991) offer that learning in the workplace is motivated primarily by everyday dilemmas and needs experienced in work activities and that people receive the greatest value from access to and participation in knowledgeable practice. This engages participants more actively in their learning while concurrently developing social skills of negotiation and consensus building. People are viewed as members of a common discourse community that work together to solve common problems through the collective understanding of all (Hamilton, 1994), and that knowledge building is an essentially social process (Ernest, 1995).

Situated learning is one way of reconceptualizing education (Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991) to view learning as situated in communities of practice, and that becoming a member of a community entails learning the skills and culture of that community. Lave and Wenger suggest that practice is the most "fruitful" way of learning. This view is important to the general recognition that mutual assistance is a valuable method of user support, and fits well the concept of learning communities that seek to provide mutual support for learning experiences.

Knowledge is thought of as the ability to participate meaningfully; learning is seen as the process of becoming a member of the working community of practice; and tools are reconceptualized as resources that facilitate integration and interaction within the group (Jordan, 1996, p. 22).

Team Learning

Moving beyond the focus on team orientation to tasks and social behaviors, Kasl et al. (1997) provide a description of the dynamic team learning processes defined as an interaction of thinking-acting. These processes operate on a continuum of individual - group interaction, and as the focus moves from framing learning in the individual's perspectives to a synthesis of all the members' views, the learning changes from learning by the individual to collective learning and mutual creation of knowledge by the team. The synergistic mode of learning, characterized by the team's ability to frame issues and challenge deeply held assumptions, describes the type of skills valued in organizations to help people deal with change and ambiguity in their environment.

Research Questions:

This paper describes a qualitative case study with a focus on identifying the important elements that contribute to or hinder the development of the virtual learning communities. Three research questions were addressed in this study:

(1) What types of learning and meaning-making were found within the virtual groups?
(2) What types of group interactions were evident within the virtual groups?
(3) What were the essential characteristics that appeared to promote or impede the development of learning communities?

Research Methodology:

The primary data for this research were the verbatim on-line transcripts of the web conversations of the three small groups formed for the action science casework. The use of Facilitate.com web-conferencing software enabled the authors to "observe" group behavior and analyze the participants' "talk" to understand actions and meaning created in the virtual context of the web. The on-line work of this course provided approximately 250 pages of transcripts for analysis. Additional data from participant and facilitator observations, reflection papers, and course evaluations served as supporting documentation.

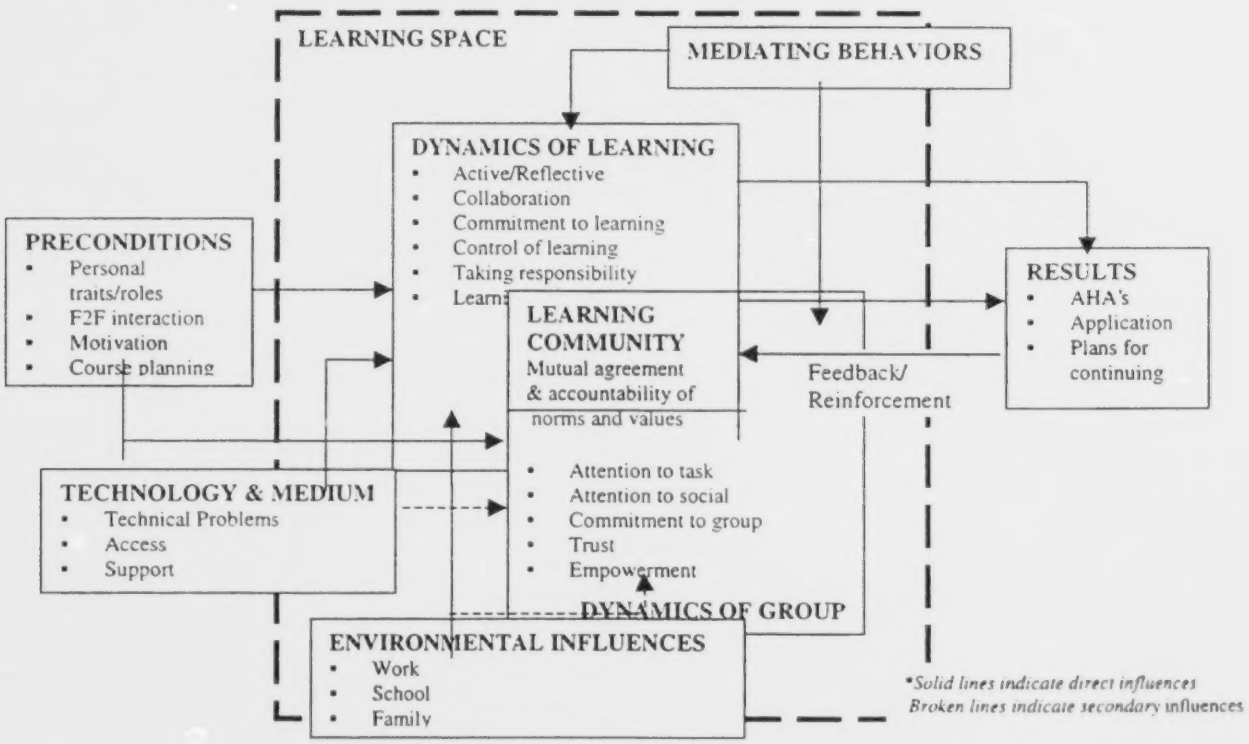
To understand the "what" of virtual learning communities, each group was analyzed as a case study, (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994) to focus on the "bounded" context of the small groups' on-line casework. The verbatim transcript of each group's on-line work on the web was analyzed from a constructivist perspective using conversation analysis in the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) to develop categories related to the learning and group processes in the on-line environment. The text was viewed as "pieces" of conversation that built on one another to form patterns of communication and learning. The use of conversational analysis sought to provide a sociological approach for understanding the social organization and function of the groups. This methodology focused on the social aspects and natural data as a means of asking "what their order looks like and how it is put together by those who, in fact, produce it" (Button & Lee, 1987, p.3). The axial coding indicated categories were peer-reviewed for establishing trustworthiness of the analysis. In a cross-case analysis (Yin, 1981), categories were selectively coded as the elements that this research has tentatively described as core components of virtual learning communities.

The sample for this study was each of the three on-line groups. To establish their unique identities before leaving Manchester, the groups were named Arches, Doors, and Windows. The last two are based on the rooms they used during the T-groups, and Arches signifies an architectural feature used as a logo by both universities. Each group was asked to maintain the confidentiality of their own group on-line and to respect that of the others. There were general topic areas within the web conference that were available to all participants, including one for general discussion of the action science process, one with contact information for all participants, and one for an on-line conversation with Dr. Robert Putnam, a former student of Chris Argyris and an expert on action science. The two on-line sessions for the entire class and the work of the facilitators provided the common links among groups.

Findings and Discussion

Findings indicated that the virtual groups were most effective as learning communities when they acted from *mutually* established norms and values (either implicit or explicit) that governed both the learning and group behavior processes. Three contributing factors that influenced these processes from outside the distance learning environment were identified as pre-conditions, environmental influences, and results. Two factors integral to the learning environment were identified as learning dynamics and group dynamics. Technology and mediating behaviors/strategies were two factors that directly affected the dynamics of both group and learning processes, but in ways that could either support or hinder the processes of a group. These are presented in a model (see Figure 1) that shows the contributing, core, and mediating factors that existed in these virtual communities.

Figure 1. Model of a Learning Community



Types of Learning and Meaning-making

Findings revealed that collaborative learning and knowledge building (See Table 1) did occur within all of the groups on some level. The skills of dialogue and inquiry supported efforts in making connections within individual cases and across the work of the group, particularly when synthesizing work on a theory-in-use (TIU). This sometimes was as simple as asking for consideration of an overlooked idea, to pulling together the assorted thoughts of all of the group's members for a TIU, to making connections and recognizing patterns in previous pieces of information that become the foundation for new approaches to the issue. The more powerful instances of group learning, however, occurred when a group's efforts helped uncover and make new meanings of the work not only for the case writer but for the whole group, as in this example:

.... J wrote: I feel these two case studies and the interventions have been and are leading me to take a closer look at my internal conversations and with practice increase my effectiveness [sic] within groups. I have

experienced some tough moments but that is good. I'm ok. I have been really surprised at how much this has affected me emotionally. Some nuts are hard to crack. I'm still laughing at M's quote. "Are the voices in my head bothering you?". What a line! I feel like as a group you have done an incredible job of using the scant data I provided to making inquiries, attributions to get at some of these issues of mine. (I [k]now where some of the selfdoubt comes from. Thanks again for your thoughtfulness [sic].)
.... M followed with: I'm shutting down on this case and just wanted to thank J for working so hard this week, and I want to thank all of my fellow case workers for teaching me yet again how rich a case is when you look at it with a discerning action scientist's mind.

And another exchange:

..... M wrote: I tried to develop a Level II inquiry in studying my case this week. A Level II inquiry (I'm making this up as I go along--with a margarita by my side) is more open, more directed at uncovering feelings of the other. . . . What I'm espousing is that Level I inquiries should follow any attribution or advocacy. Level II inquiries need to happen early in the transaction so you know what constitutes win-win. Without the Level II inquiry, you only have enough data to go for win-. This sounds incredibly preachy, please remember that I'm talking to myself out loud in a room of onlookers. (Are the voices in my head)
.... J responded: Some day someone is going to say, "Yes I wish you could keep it down in there." Actually, what's happening lately is my head is trusting my mouth more. I like what is happening though. . . . My sense is my interactions are becoming more Model 2 . . . what I sense in me is openness, authenticity and hopefully movement toward learning instead of just quick, efficient wrap-up.

In addition to the collaborative learning efforts that were so much a part of the group interaction, there was also evidence of other types of group learning: the learning with each other and from each other when particular skills or strengths of one member were recognized; and peer tutoring and coaching that went on within groups, especially with learning about the tools and processes of action science. The learning was experiential as people tried new techniques and new tools with the support of the other group members. It appeared that the greater the commitment of the group to the process and the greater the level of trust in the group, the more willing individuals were to learn in these ways.

The personal learning of participants was often based on off-line reflection on the work that was occurring on-line. Time for reflection is one of the benefits of virtual learning environments and particularly applicable for this type of content. Participants often mentioned "going to sleep on it so that I can take some time to reflect" and "I also notice in rereading the transcript that I attend to input and suggestions better in the reflective mode of reviewing the transcript. Part of this may be caused by my lowered defensiveness now that I've accepted conclusions they were leading to." Time for reflection was also perceived as a downside to the casework when one person said, "I've never done this much reflection on one issue in my life! Give me Manchester anyday [sic]. We were done in what, 2 hours?"

Types of Group Processes

Each group engaged in their own set of behaviors and established a unique identity that was largely the result of the group dynamics (See Table 1). Commitment to the group and to the learning seemed to be salient features of the high performing groups and made many of the group dynamics transparent. The two issues that seemed to be critical but that detracted from the performance of the groups were agreement of an acceptable level of participation and engagement with the group and the "silence" of members who were not openly committed to the process.

One group raised the question about levels of participation but never agreed on a group norm:

.... M wrote: I have to be more upfront about my concern, which is mainly about the level of activity here in this group. I am frustrated at the low level and a general lack of emotional engagement and commitment. I am misreading this? Do those of you who are here on a regular basis share my concern? It *is* a difficult medium, but it is made more difficult by silences.
.... R responded: M, I too feel that perhaps we aren't as active as we could be. But I am OK with it.

The issue of silence by a group member was related in this posting:

.... V wrote: Thank you H for giving an honest reaction to the things that we've said here and that we perhaps 'lived through' during the case weeks. I appreciate that very much. Of course your 'silence'

> reminded me also very much of T-group. And again, like in T-group, my reaction is that yes, you do have the right to be silent and I (we?) do not wish to push you, to oblige you to participate more in the dialogue. But (and I must have said this somewhere before, perhaps in the last days of M's case), although you might be learning loads, we cannot enjoy your input (and this is even stronger in cyber than f2f, because here we cannot even see that you're following the case in the first place). I honestly found your questions and comments, when they were there, often insightful. With the consequence that if you were not there, I missed these insights.

For those who were engaged in the process, it was addictive, "This gets addictive, I can't wait to get back to the PC and see[n] what's going on in the case!" and empowering, "For me to be able to do this is very empowering, that is one of the reasons why I am finding this addictive. It is interaction at quite another level from any other I have." The more open and effective a group was able to deal with conflict, the more constructively it was able to delve into the sensitive areas of an individual's learning. Trust was an essential component of the group dynamics.

Groups also had fun. The more engaged they were in the process, the more they seemed to be able to relax and enjoy the hours they spent communicating via the Web. This frame of mind is illustrated by these comments: "want to meet in chat room??? - M ..... I love this stuff!! See you there. - A" and "K, we might be on at the same time. I'm going to go over to the chat room. Come over and visit with me while I have my morning coffee. - M" And they expressed their like for each other with a great big cyberspace hug: (((X))).

Table 1. Direct Factors in the Development of a Learning Community

Group Dynamics	**Learning Dynamics**
• Attention to task management	• Mutual agreement & accountability of successful learning experience (participation & goals)
• Attention to social needs	• Active/reflective learning processes
• Mutual agreement & accountability on group norms and values	• Collaboration
• Engagement with group members	• Knowledge building / making meaning
• Commitment to others (being there)	• Feedback
• Expressed care about people	• Inquiry with data
• Awareness of group needs	• Engagement with content
• Role development	• Sincerity-honest questions & answers
• Creating presence/recognizing absence	• Responding to others
• Cross-cultural influences	• Use of metaphors
• Developing own language	• Use of language of content
• Personal sharing	• Control of learning
• Celebration	• Meta-inquiry
• Closure	• Sense of purpose
• Fun	• Peer tutoring/coaching
	• Using each other's strengths

Essential Characteristics That Promote or Hinder Development of Virtual Learning Communities

The essential characteristic that defined a learning community appeared to be the fusion of the learning and group dynamics of group into a core set of shared values and norms agreed to and accepted by the group. Within the learning space, groups could address the learning processes necessary to complete the work for the course. They could also address group process issues as they chose. However, a learning community was evident only when the processes from each of these areas were combined into the fabric that defined the group. An exchange between two members of one group illustrate the power of being a learning community:

> ... K wrote: We are on a train, whether we go through green fields, deserts, mountains or cardboard cities we are always moving. Whether the learning is obvious or obtuse, hard or easy we have kept learning and none of us has got off the train.
>
> ... J responded: I very much like the visual of the train because of its connectedness and also because it moves a[t] varying speeds. I am also thinking of a mode of travel with no tracks or a destination - kind of like the Enterprise. I feel like I've been beamed up on several occasions plus there have been experiences during our cases I've stood back and asked "what planet am I on?" I have also felt that I was in slow motion and at warp

speed. If what they say in science that matter is never destroyed, my hope for myself is that my matter is reconfiguring in a learning way each time I experience opportunities for change.

Mediating Behaviors and Strategies

A number of behaviors or strategies (See Table 2) were identified that were able either to support or to impede the development of the learning community, depending on their use by the group or individual. Used productively and sensitively in one group, a behavior such as conflict served as a way to open up a dialogue that led to new realizations for the writer. In another group, the same behavior served effectively to stop a line of inquiry that closed learning for the case writer and disengaged members of the group from the process.

All of the behaviors existed along a continuum of use from very negative to very positive. Groups and individuals made decisions about their use, as they tried them out and practiced with them in the first few weeks of the on-line work. The lack of the face-2-face responses offered the greatest challenges to participants as they looked for new ways to judge the effectiveness of behaviors in their virtual learning environment.

Table 2. Mediating Factors in the Development of a Virtual Learning Community

Mediating Behaviors/Strategies	**Technology & Medium**
• Conflict	• Technical problems
• Safety	• Access
• Empowerment	• Experience
• Emotions	• Technical support
• Humor	• Technical Facilitation
• Intimacy	
• Empathy/acknowledgement of feelings	
• Trust	
• Being explicit	
• Listening	
• Openness	
• Defensiveness	
• Expressing / recognizing fears	
• Excitement / fun / enjoyment	
• Authenticity	

The Technology

While the research questions did not directly address the technology, the fact that this study was focused on findings about the elements of a virtual learning community, the use and effect of the technology were embedded throughout the work of the groups and the study. The effect of technology (See Table 2) was seen in two primary ways: first, the problems that arose from the software or network itself that presented technical glitches for the participants; and second the psychological issues it raised for participants about communicating in cyberspace without the benefit of eye contact and body.

Similar to the other mediating factors, the technology was seen either as a means to support the learning or to hinder it. The difference appeared to be the level of commitment to the other components of the learning and group processes. For some, technical problems were sometimes an irritation but the technology itself became transparent to the user over time. For others, the reported dislike of the technology became an excuse for low participation levels.

One participant summed up her reactions to the technology this way:

.... The on-line experience has become another reality for me. At first I felt awkward with the technology and responding. After the first few attempts the thoughts and writing became less stressful. Now I find I just say it. I feel our group has strong commitment. My feelings from the responses, inquiry and support is that we care about each other both in terms of learning but more importantly in terms of humanity. Having the initial f2f relationship has made it easier to for me to do the electronic. I visualize your faces and expressions; that's a comfort to me. I've trusted myself to trust you. I also feel very territorial and protective of our group.

Contributing Factors to a Virtual Learning Community

The virtual learning space does not exist in a void, but is just one part of the participants' world. Preconditions (See Table 3) were identified as those intangible things, or "baggage", that a participant brought to the experience of the virtual community. Environmental influences were those things that had to be attended to outside of the learning community and that at times impinged on the virtual community. Results were those things that participants took away from this experience and that also provided feedback into the community.

Table 3. Contributing Factors in the Development of a Virtual Learning Community

Preconditions	Environmental Influences	Results
• Personal traits	• Work	• AHA's!
• F2F experience with group	• School	• Use in practice
• power roles outside of group	• Home	• Practice of learning
• Confidence in ability to contribute (self-esteem)	• Family	• Plans for future learning
		• Recognition of learning
• Motivation to participate		• Self-observable changes in behavior

Implications

Training has become much more than just designing and delivering courses. It is also about facilitating participation in and supporting learning communities. ". . . there is a big difference between organizing classroom training that is supposed to be the totality of the learning event, and seeing it as part of the practice of learning communities who are in charge of their own learning" (Wenger, 1997, p. 25). Using collaborative web-based technology, HRD professionals have the opportunity to redesign learning experiences and extend their support to virtual learning communities that include diverse and distributed participants, fostering the ability of individuals, groups, and organizations to learn and "reconstruct existing perspectives" in new ways (Nonaka &Takeuchi, 1995, p. 46).

An effort to understand how groups form a learning community and the processes by which learning occurs within groups across space and time builds on the research that focuses on participation and learning in a collaborative environment. The findings of this study have begun to define the "what" of virtual learning communities, indicating the integrative nature of the learning and group dynamics that takes place within them. It has also begun to elaborate the skills participants may find useful for collaborating through technology with distant and diverse people. This has implications for practitioners and learners in organizations that are using technology to communicate and build knowledge through collaborative efforts.

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Conducting Multilingual Qualitative Research in Human Resource Development: Implications for Validity and Reliability

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This paper addresses the question: "How can you ensure the validity and reliability of a qualitative study conducted in more than one language?" The decisions confronted by the author in a study conducted in three languages and the implications for validity and reliability in cross-cultural research are discussed.

Keywords: Multilingual Qualitative Research; Validity and Reliability

The recent challenges faced by the author of this paper while working on a research study conducted in three languages made her aware of the lack of guidance not only in the human resource development literature, but also in the cross-cultural research literature regarding multilingual qualitative research. The researcher's awareness of the implications of collecting data in different languages which has to be translated in English for analysis and report on the validity and reliability of a study led to this paper. This paper addresses the question of how to ensure the validity and reliability of a qualitative study conducted in more than one language.

The Study

The purpose of the study which led to this paper was to find out how owner-managers of small private companies in Romania learn what they need to know to run their businesses successfully in the transition to a free market economy forced by the collapse of the centrally planned economy and of the dictatorial, communist regime. In order to achieve this purpose, a qualitative methodology using the critical incident technique was selected and in-depth, face-to-face interviews with owner-managers of successful (on the top list of companies compiled by the Chamber of Commerce at county and country level) small (2-99 employees) Romanian companies were conducted. The managers were selected to represent both genders and the nationalities (Hungarian and Romanian) specific to the two regions of the country represented in the study. The researcher was aware that the best way in which these managers would describe their experiences would be in their mother tongue and she decided to pursue this approach. Another consideration in making this decision was that it would have become a gargantuan task to find a sample of owner-managers fitting the sample selection criteria and fluent in English. As the researcher is a native Romanian of Hungarian nationality, speaking both languages at mother tongue level, she felt confident about her decision. As the study was conceptualized and had to be reported in English, the real challenges arose after the data was gathered and transcribed verbatim by the researcher and the time came for its translation. The researcher is multilingual. In the last fifteen years, she used English extensively in her work by translating, interpreting, and tutoring from English to Romanian and Hungarian, and vice-versa. The translation of the transcribed material, in order to ensure the rigor of the study, proved to be a study by itself. In the following sections, the steps taken by the researcher to ensure the validity and reliability of her translation will be described.

Preparation for the Study and Data Gathering

As a preparation for this study, the researcher conducted a pilot telephone interview in Romanian. She transcribed verbatim the recorded interview and then translated it into English. A back translation was performed for parts of the data by a Romanian citizen residing in the United States who had previous experience in translating. The back translated parts were very similar with the original. Some of the differences were in the choice of words with similar meanings and slight differences in syntax. This process reassured the researcher that the meaning of the data was kept intact after the translation.

All face-to-face interviews were tape recorded and fieldnotes and memos were written by the researcher in English immediately after the interviews. Fieldnotes are defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) as "the written

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account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (p. 107). According to the authors, fieldnotes consist of a descriptive and a reflective part. The descriptive part represents the researcher's best effort to objectively record the details of what occurred in the field (e.g. description of the setting, depiction of activities, portraits of the participants). The reflective part represents the subjective side of the researcher (e.g. reflections on ethical dilemmas and conflicts, on the researcher's own feelings, reactions to the experience). Patton (1990) advises researchers not to trust anything to future recall and thus to take fieldnotes in the setting or as soon as possible after the event occurred. In order to be able to concentrate on the interview process, the researcher took fieldnotes immediately after each interview. During the data gathering, analysis and interpretation phases of the study, the researcher also wrote memos about the issues pertinent to each of these phases. Thus, taking fieldnotes and memos during a qualitative study where the researcher is considered the instrument is very important. It is a way to acknowledge and control the researcher's effect. In this instance, it is an important way to document the context of the interview to later guide translation efforts.

Translation of the Data

Linguists were preoccupied since centuries with the notion of accuracy in translations. The translation literature is abundant in approaches and debates about different approaches to translation ranging from transformation of a text including creation and manipulation to a faithful adherence to the original text. As Berman (1992) described:

> The domain of translation has always been the site of a curious contradiction. On the one hand, translation is considered to be purely intuitive practice - in part technical, in part literary - which, at bottom does not require any specific theory or form of reflection. On the other hand, there has been - at least since Cicero, Horace, and Saint Jerome - an abundance of writings on translation of a religious, philosophical, literary, methodological or, more recently scientific nature. (p. 1)

As these debates proved useful in raising the researcher's awareness of the difficulties involved in making decisions about how to translate a text, they failed to offer the guidance necessary for conducting her multilingual qualitative study. The words of Wilhelm von Humboldt as cited by Berman (1992) resonated in her mind in the midst of her study. On July 23, 1796, Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote the following in his Letter to Schlegel:

> Any translator must inevitably encounter one of the following obstacles: he will cleave with too much accuracy either to the original, at the expense of his people's language and taste, or to the originality of his people, at the expense of the work to be translated. (ix)

The translation task in qualitative research is significantly time-consuming. As a result, the researcher translated nine interviews; three other translators translated the other six. One of the translators is a Romanian linguist who a few years ago moved to Canada and has over twenty years of experience in translating to and from English and Romanian. The other two translators are fluent in Romanian, Hungarian, and English, have lived in both Romania and the United States, and have experience in translating. Although it is impossible to achieve a word-for-word translation, both the researcher and the three translators made an attempt to keep the rendering as consistent as possible and still convey the meaning of the original message. The interviewed managers were very eloquent in describing their learning experiences, but this translation for meaning rather than word-for-word gave even more coherence of the translated sentences and phrases. In order to arrive to this decision, the researcher spent countless hours reading the translation literature and talking to translators.

During the translation process, the researcher was aware of the selfhood paradox described by Will (1993) in the following way: "In going out to a foreign text, to translate it into our language, we carry our personal tastes, language-style, perceptions with us, and what we bring back is essentially our own self-expression in words partially prompted by someone else's expression" (p. 47). Thus, she made an attempt to control some of these translation biases by having parts of her translations also translated by two of the above mentioned translators and then comparing the two translations. An side-by-side example of two translations is presented in Table 1. The shading and parenthetical notes in the table illustrate how some of the judgment calls were made in this process. As in the case of the pilot there were a few differences in the choice of words with similar meanings and a few differences in syntax.

Table 1.
Evidence of the Translation Process

Translation 1	**Translation 2**
R: And what is your opinion why is this happening? P: Well, this is the cancer of the Romanian society - instability - you don□t know what tomorrow will bring, you have no idea. Eh, you don□t know what will happen tomorrow, I will die, my business will be taken away, another government will come that will do things differently, it will not allow, etc. **[“Eh” and the repetition of what will happen tomorrow were kept because of the emphasis put by the manager on this part of the sentence]** People are afraid. There is no such thing as security, stability as it is in developed countries where tomorrow will be like today or a little bit worse or a little bit better, but there is a stable environment. If I open a business I do it thinking that my son will have a chance to take over and hopefully his son will also be there, but here, here it is not possible. Tomorrow they will take it, a new owner will come, or an old one or somebody, they will take it; so why should I put work into it, why should I restore it, because of this instability, how should I enter into a one year contract? **[The manager used the first person “I”, but it can be interpreted as an issue/question pertaining to owner-managers in general]** They are somewhat right as this is generated by the society□s instability. R: And what is your opinion why are the state owned stores not entering into a contract? Let□s say that the private ones, as you told me, lack tomorrow□s security, but the state owned ones receive their salaries anyway. Did you try with the state owned ones? P: Of course, but the state owned stores show no interest, no interest to make profit, why should they make profit? If the salary of the employees is ensured and the good salary for the director and the chief accountant and there are stores which have four, five, six directors and I don□t know how many chief accountants, if their salaries are made there is no incentive whatsoever to make more. For example, in many cases my only chance to succeed, you can imagine what an unbearable situation, was to bribe the director in order for him to take my products - products which brought him a huge sale last year ensuring the salaries of I don□t know how many employees. But he told me □Sir, I□m sorry but I cannot take any now from this, ok, how much do you have□ holding his pocket **[waiting for the bribe]**. So, this is the situation, a disaster. I□m telling you this is the Romanian society. I□m not sure maybe if the competition would have been stronger, but anyway in a western country we	R: What is your opinion? Why don t they enter into a contract? **[The translator clarifies the context of the comment - the contract]** P: This is the Romanian society s cancer - instability - you have no idea what will happen tomorrow. I can die, and my business will be taken away, another government will be in power and have different regulations, and will not allow, etc. People are afraid. We don□t have the stability that the developed countries have, that what we have today we will have it also tomorrow, that today this is for sure and tomorrow it will be the same or a little bit worse or a little bit better, but at least it is stability. If I open a business, I open it thinking that my son will continue to do it, and after that his son will continue it, but this is not possible. Tomorrow it can be confiscated, a new owner will come, or an old one, who knows? Why to invest in it, to renovate the business, because of this instability, why should I enter into a one year contract? They are right when they say that this is generated by the society s instability. R: What is your opinion, why the state owned companies will not enter into a contract? I understand that the private companies have no stability for tomorrow, but the state owned ones, as you said, get payed anyway. Did you try with the state owned companies? P: I sure did try **[more colloquial, but we decide on “of course” as it conveyed the same meaning]**, but they will not show interest, they are not interested in profit making, why would they be? They make the salaries for their employees, the big salaries for the director, the chief accountant, and there are stores with four, five, or six directors, so they make those salaries, and above that they are not interested. For example, in many places I succeeded by bribing the director to make him buy our merchandise, what an embarrassing situation for me, merchandise which last year he sold with a big profit and he made the salaries for I don□t know how many people. He told me □Sir, I□m sorry but I cannot buy anything from you right now, so how much do you have□, and he was showing his pocket. So, this is the situation, a catastrophic one. This is the Romanian society. I don□t know, maybe if the competition would have been stronger, or in a western society I would not be in this situation. After so much work I put into this business I shouldn t be in this situation. Maybe there the competition would have destroyed me, but still I should not be in this situation.

won□t be in this situation. Thus, after so much work I should not be in this situation. I should not be here. Maybe there the competition would have destroyed me, but even then I think I should not be in this stage.
R: So, if you think back of all this, what do you feel?
P: Helplessness, anger. You feel that your head is blowing up, but you cannot do anything. You explain, at the end you beg □Please, Sir, my products are so good that even in the west you cannot find better ones□ - you can, but if you import them you have to pay three times as much than for mine and mine are as good as those. [**The underlined part was an explanation to the researcher not to the state-owned store managers which was not clear from the context, but the researcher could even recall the intonations of the manager's voice**] but for whatever reason he doesn□t want them.
R: In summary, what did you learn from this situation?
P: Well, from this situation, compromising.

R: When you think back to this situation, what do you feel?
P: Helplessness, anger. I feel that my brain is blowing up, but there is nothing I can do about it. [**Although the underlined expression was almost translated word-for-word, "your head is blowing up" was decided upon as it was felt that it is closer to what would be used in the United States and although it was used in a more general way with "you" not "I"**] You explain and even beg that □Sir my merchandise is good, even better than what the westerners make□ - and you explain that if you import the same merchandise from a western country it will cost three times more then if you buy it from me, but for whatever reason he doesn□t want it.
R: What did you learn from this situation?
P: From this situation I learned to compromise. [

The translation of idioms prompted some interesting discussions as there were times when it was difficult to find a matching English idiom for the Hungarian or Romanian one and the selection of words to convey the same meaning was discussed. For example, the Hungarian idiom "helyre pofozni" (where "helyre" means "back to his/her/it place and "pofozni" means "slap in the face") was difficult to translate as its meaning could be making something right after you made a mistake, bringing something/somebody back to shape, fixing something, bringing something up to date or a combination of some of these. In the context of the translation, the decision was made on "fixing something." The researcher started a dictionary of Hungarian - English (e.g. ravasz mint a roka = as sly as a fox), Romanian - English (e.g. e∏ti la cheremul lor = you are at their mercy) idioms. There were some grammatical issues in the translations which also needed to be discussed. For example, in Hungarian language, the personal pronoun for the third person singular or plural cannot be distinguished by gender, thus the gender of the person could be deducted only from the context which did not always contain this information. In such cases the decision was made to translate it as he/she. Although there were only minor differences in the translations, the researcher discussed all of them with the translators and changes were agreed upon when necessary. The six translations which were not translated by the researcher were all side-by-side double checked by the researcher with their originals in Hungarian or Romanian. The researcher marked with a red pen the few places where she thought the meaning of the translation was not clear and discussed these notes with the translators. A few minor changes were made as a result of this process. For example one of the translators wrote: "And at a certain moment I found myself with the possibilities behind the necessities." Although this translation was the closest to what was said one collective word which could have clarified this sentence was not translated. Thus, we decided on: "And at a certain moment I found myself with a shortage of equipment and workforce, thus with my possibilities behind the demands."

Validity and Reliability

In the scientific paradigm, validity and reliability are considered the yardsticks of any believable and trustworthy research. Merriam & Simpson (1995) contend that □issues of validity and reliability are important considerations in any kind of research. But how one views validity and reliability in qualitative research differs somewhat from positivist research□ (p. 101). Addressing these issues, Guba and Lincoln (1991) describe how

> within the scientific paradigm, truth value, typically called internal validity, depends on the degree of isomorphism between the study data and the phenomena to which they relate. There is one

> reality, and information is internally valid if it describes that reality and facilitates its control and manipulation. The naturalistic inquirer, however deals with multiple realities; and in the area of behavioral studies, those realities exist in the minds of people. (pp. 104-05)

Merriam (1988) also points out that in the naturalistic inquiry "because reality is holistic, multi-dimensional, and ever changing, it is not a single, fixed objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured" (p. 167). The author continues by stressing that assessing the isomorphism between the data collected and the reality from which they were derived is an inappropriate determinant of validity in this approach as what is being observed are people's constructions of reality and how they understand the world. Thus, according to the above authors, the validity of a study rests on the researcher's demonstration that he/she represented those multiple constructions adequately. Because of the researcher's role as an instrument of the research, and his/her proximity to its reality, internal validity is considered a strength of qualitative research (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). In order to ensure internal validity, the researcher represented the manager's construction of reality through the thick description of their accounts and by reflecting on her memos in an attempt to acknowledge and control her biases. This is particularly important when translating others' reality. It was felt in this study that it was more important to convey as nearly as possible what was meant rather than a verbatim rendering. When working in multiple languages, literal translation may be meaningless. For example the Hungarian part of a sentence "...a f ld munka ut<n, j n a m<sik ðs teszi a kalapot a fejðre", in a word-for-word translation would be "...after the dirt work the other is coming and puts his hat on his head " which in fact means that after the basement was dug out, the man decided to step out from the deal (took his hat and walked out).

Merriam (1988) and Merriam & Simpson (1995) suggest that rather than measuring reliability as it is defined by quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers should ask themselves whether the results of the study make sense, are dependable and consistent with the collected data. In order to ensure dependable results, the authors recommend several strategies such as: an account of the researcher's assumptions and the theory behind the study; a clear description of the research subjects and the environment in which the data collection took place as well as of the data analysis process; the use of triangulation by using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the findings of the study; member checking; and peer review. In talking about enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis, Patton (1990) also contends that "The qualitative researcher has an obligation to be methodical in reporting sufficient details of data collection and the processes of analysis to permit others to judge the quality of the resulting product" (p. 462)

Although member checking was not possible in this study due to the difficulties in reaching the managers participating in this study after the researcher returned to the United States, the researcher used the other suggested strategies to enhance the quality and credibility of this study as they are described in the following section. This is particularly important since she could also not check her translations with these managers since they did not speak fluent English. In her report of the study, the researcher described as clearly as possible the theoretical framework guiding the study, the sample selection, data collection procedures and the conditions under which these took place, the approach and methods of translation, and the process of data analysis. Triangulation was also used through multiple sources of data. The researcher collected several incidents from each manager, thus creating a more holistic picture of their life, struggles, and learning experiences in their quest for survival amidst the unprecedented changes in their environment.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also emphasized the importance of maintaining an audit trail -- documentation about the entire research process describing procedures clearly enough so that others can understand them, reconstruct them and subject them to scrutiny. Lincoln and Guba used the metaphor of the fiscal auditor who examines both the process and the product of the inquiry, in order to arrive at certain trustworthiness judgments and provide certain attestations. For this examination the fiscal auditor needs fiscal records, thus an audit trail. Without such an audit trail he/she would not be able to determine the dependability or the confirmability of the bookkeeping. Thus, it is imperative that such records be maintained during the inquiry; otherwise there will be no possibility of an audit later. As Miles and Huberman (1994) contend, careful record keeping is a way of connecting with important audiences. According to the authors, the audience could be the self and in this case records keep track of what was done along the way and may suggest ways of improving next steps. The audience could also be the readers of the research report who need to know what was done and how, as a way of assessing the credibility of the findings. A subset of this audience could also be the other researchers who are interested in secondary analysis of the data, want to carry out meta-analysis or synthesis of several studies, or want to replicate the findings to strengthen or refute them.

The researcher developed a clear audit trail of the study. She began by filing all the raw data consisting of tapes, field notes, documents from the Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Statistics Department. Then the

transcribed materials were filed by manager together with the translated transcripts. There are two or three versions of the translated transcripts for each managers depending on who translated the materials. If the translation was done by the researcher, in some cases the translation contains notes regarding some changes as a result of its comparison with parts translated by another translator. If the translation was not done by the researcher, one of the versions has suggested changes by the researcher and the other one has the changes finally implemented after the discussion with the translator. Then for each manager there is a coded translated transcript. Each manager's file also contains a cameo including information about the manager, his/her company and a description of the critical incidents described by that manager. The researcher's handwritten memos (methodological, analytical, and theoretical) were filed separately in a special folder. The methodological memos also contain decisions taken in the translations, the dictionaries of idioms and of some words which posed challenges in translation. All citations bear the manager's code whose words are illustrated and the page number of the translated document from where the citation was extracted. Thus, all citations can be easily traced back to the translated interviews.

Conclusions and Implications

Although the researcher's study was not funded by a foundation or international institution and the managers participating in the study were not used to researchers roaming around, the researcher of this study was pleasantly surprised by the trust and interest showed by these managers in her work and study. The researcher noticed that it was important for these managers that she was a native of their country, spoke their mother tongue, grew up, was educated and worked in the same environment they did until 1990. The discussions preceding the interviews about different topics familiar to both the researcher and the managers were very helpful in establishing the trust level necessary for a meaningful interaction. Thus, the researcher believes that it is very important to collect data in the native language of the participants (especially if they don't master well the language in which the research will be reported). To build trust, it is also important for the participants in the study to see interest in their culture and the context in which they operate. Thus, collaborative work in cross-cultural research with colleagues familiar with the language and culture of the settings unknown to the human resource development researchers and practitioners is strongly recommended.

The use of several translators in translating the gathered data is considered by the researcher a very important decision in ensuring the validity and reliability of the translations. This process could be called "triangulation through multiple sources in translation." The researcher noticed that in some cases it was easier for her to translate the data as she had a better understanding of what was meant by the interviewees. As she conducted the interviews, she could recall the tonality of voice and non-verbal communication of the participant during the interview as well as the ambiance. Nevertheless, the discussions with the other translators brought to surface different points of view and issues needing clarifications and proved to be challenging and rewarding in the same time. Back translation was also used for sections of the data translated by the researcher in her pilot study. Although this was a reassuring way to test the judgment calls of the translator, it did not bring to surface the wealth of understanding of multiple translators (triangulation) and the decision making process involved. It was a growing experience to work with other people on these translations.

As in the last decade globalization opened new venues for cross-cultural research and practice in the HRD field even in countries which were unreachable before, the author hopes that the issues addressed in this paper would help both researchers and practitioners working in different cultures and with different languages.

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An Ethnographic Study of Cross-Cultural Impacts on Tutoring in an Organization

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This ethnography portrays one organization's use of tutoring in the Japanese language of a midwestern white male by a Japanese female instructor. The behaviors displayed by both the Japanese tutor and the adult learner, whose nationality and native cultures differ, and how the adult learner was impacted by these differences was examined. Insight into this cross-cultural interaction shed light into the creation of a framework for understanding cross-cultural learning interchanges such as this one.

Keywords: Adult Learning, Culture, Instruction

Because of the increasing globalization of the marketplace, United States business organizations are interfacing on a daily basis with companies and people from other countries. Employees within these corporations are being asked to work in and adapt to settings that may place them directly within cultures vastly different from their native cultures. Adler, Doktor, and Redding (1986) concluded that "organizations are becoming more similar in terms of structure and technology, whereas people's behavior within those organizations continues to manifest [national] culturally based dissimilarities" (p.302). In light of this globalization and the tendency of individuals to manifest cultural behavioral differences, this researcher was driven to understand the role of culture in organizational instructional situations that HRD professionals are asked to assess and specifically, how culture and cultural differences impact learning and instructional effectiveness.

Background Research and Theory

Learning in business environments is complex because the cultural frames that affect business are multidimensional; employees' beliefs are shaped not only by societal values, but also by organizational affiliation and occupational alliances (Hansen & Brooks, 1994). Instruction in these environments is also increasingly and comparably complex. Bilingual tutors face a variety of challenges. What is seldom recognized, at least in published literature on the subject, is that the task that confronts the bilingual tutor goes beyond the basic, explicit aim of providing instruction in the native language for specific subject areas as a means to gain proficiency in the second language. Indeed, at the very minimum, the bilingual tutor is a negotiator between cultures (Montero-Sieburth & Perez, 1987). This study thus finds its framework in two major areas of research and theory: a) culture and b) adult learning.

Negotiating Culture

"Culture" is defined by Kluckhohn (1951, p. 86, 5) as patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting which are acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, and which constitute the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts. All cultures create belief systems that define appropriate and inappropriate social behavior. Meaning making is clearly reflected in the often unconscious rules that guide decision making, values, perceptions, communication styles, and so on.

Hofstede (1980) defined culture as "collective programming of the mind" that is rooted in value systems of major population groups and stable over long periods of history. Like Kluckhohn, Hofstede found that these mental programs serve to guide decision making, perceptions and communication styles, as well as learning preferences. Hofstede found by theoretical reasoning and statistical analysis that four main dimensions may be used to describe cultural differences. While one is not able to make inferences about individual members of cultures from Hofstede's national summary scores, the findings are used here to describe United States and Japanese culture in general.

Measured on a national culture scale, Japan showed a higher desire for interpersonal power or influence between two people (for example, a boss and subordinate) than did the United States, although the United States fell in the middle of the scale. Implications for education are noted by Hofstede, "...students are more dependent on teachers. There is more rote learning, and the asking of questions by students is seldom encouraged; teachers are more often supposed to be omniscient, even if they do not like it" (p. 99). Hofstede found the amount of anxiety that

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occurs with ambiguity for the Japanese was very high and double that of the United States. This would indicate a "preference for clear requirements and instructions" versus a low ranking which would indicate a "preference for broad guidelines" (p. 132).

In a highly individualistic society, leadership is the ideal aspired to versus membership and the collectivity as the ideal. The United Stated ranked very highly on this dimension, with Japan in the middle of the range, at half of the United States ranking. "Americans," said Stewart (1972), "have a tendency to see themselves in terms of sex and social roles which allows for freedom of choice in actions. The Japanese point of reference is the network of obligations among members of a group—the social nexus. Congeniality in social interaction is a predominant value among the Japanese" (p. 69). Japan also rated very highly on a dimension demonstrating a cultural affiliation for assertiveness versus nurturing (p. 176) while the United States rated above average on this indicator.

Linking Learning Style Preferences with Instruction

Knowles' (1980) Adult Learning Theory states that consideration of prior learner experience and knowledge is critical in planning adult learning methods. Knowles also found adult learning styles to be varied, situation dependent and best utilized by the learner being in charge of his/her own learning (including setting objectives, planning content, and measuring success).

Because culture plays a key role in determining how meaning is made from various inputs and the social behaviors appropriate in learning settings, it should be considered as a major input into instructional system design and delivery within organizations. Linking instruction with culturally-derived preferences was supported by a study performed by Hayes and Allison (1988). The study used Hofstede's approach to measuring cultural differences (1984) and Honey and Mumford's learning styles questionnaire (1983) to identify and confirm links between learning style and national culture in 195 midlevel managers from East Africa, India, and the United Kingdom. This is the only study that explores cross-cultural learning style differences in corporate environments that I have located although Adler, Doktor, and Redding (1986) and Doktor (1982) did find major differences in the cognitive processes of people from different cultures. Rogers (1973) found that information that is communicated in a style very different from what is culturally common often leads to a misunderstanding or lack of comprehension.

Methodology, Methods, Data Analysis, Assumptions and Limitations

This paper is the outcome of ethnographic research carried out in studying a Japanese tutor, Ms. Kawasaki, and a midwestern corporate employee, Mr. John Smith. Mr. Smith had been receiving Ms. Kawasaki's Japanese tutelage for a total of five months at the time of this research.

Methodology

Ethnographic research methodology was chosen for this study because it has a cultural focus. Spindler and Spindler (1987) said that the "phenomenon we study as ethnographers is the dialogue of action and interaction" (p. 2). Agar (1986) labeled ethnography a process of "mediating frames of meaning" (p. 18) between the ethnographer, who brings to his or her work the tradition in which he or she participates; including the training received in professional socialization, the group among whom the ethnographer is working, and the nature of the audience for whom the ethnographer is trying to produce a report. Ethnography is appropriate for studying cross-cultural learning and interchange because it prompts the researcher to study these in the context of the larger cultural setting.

Methods

A total of twelve microcultural participant observations of the tutoring sessions held at Mr. Smith's company offices were performed. On these occasions, both the session opening and greetings between Mr. Smith and Ms. Kawasaki as well as the session closing and good-byes were observed in order to gain insight into the informal relationship between Mr. Smith and Ms. Kawasaki. The remainder of the observations were time samples (5 minutes out of every 15 minute period) during the lessons in order to reduce bias (Lundy-Dobbert, 1982). The time between the observations was used to annotate the previous observations. Mr. Smith was also observed in his home; in preparing for his lessons in order to gain insight into his behavior and his motivation for them, and during a phone call to Ms. Kawasaki to cancel a lesson. At the conclusion of the participant observations, a one hour ethnographic interview with Mr. Smith was conducted. This format was useful because it enabled Mr. Smith to feel comfortable with the researcher, and the researcher with the subject matter. The interview was written verbatim as well as tape recorded with Mr. Smith's consent.

Role analysis was chosen as a structural method for this research in order to identify behaviors associated with cultural roles for instructors and learners. To achieve this, two additional tutoring sessions were observed.

Behaviors that consistently occurred and might be conceived of as patterns relating to role definition were documented.

On the day of the second structural role analysis observation, the researcher arrived to find Ms. Kawasaki in the lobby of the FourStar office. Her earlier session had been canceled and this afforded the opportunity to obtain informal information about her work history with Mr. Smith's company, as well as some of her personal history. A similarly informal discussion occurred with Mr. Smith after all of the data were obtained. This time was used to fill gaps found in the data, such as how the company had arranged for the tutoring sessions, who had decided to engage a tutor for Mr. Smith, and so on. The research process lasted approximately one and one-half months.

Data Analysis

The data gathered by the above methods were analyzed separately as well as together. Following collection of all fifteen microcultural observations, a short summary of overall impressions was written (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 51). All of the data was then marked, coded and indexed. The analysis technique was completed by placing the data into matrices using Mr. Smith and Ms. Kawasaki on one axis and categories such as body language/posture, facial expression, tone, words spoken/dialogue, and materials on the other. Each of these categories was broken down into more specific items. The observations were then analyzed as three separate groups ("outside of tutoring sessions," "during tutoring sessions" and "approach to studies") and the data from them placed into three different matrices. Finally, an impression drawn from comparison and contrast of the data as a whole was written. Patterns across all of the observations were drawn and related to each other. Because the tutor-adult learner interaction was central to this study, research describing adult learning theory was drawn upon. The last step in the microcultural analysis was to identify gaps that remained in the study that became the impetus for the follow-up research that occurred later.

The first steps taken following the interview were to confirm the researcher's verbatim writings with the tape recording of the interview and to fill in gaps that had occurred. The interview information was then transcribed and analyzed for informant logic by linking key words in the questions to those in Mr. Smith's comments. The data were then identified for sentence structure and word types and laid out by drawing sentences into trees. This enabled the identification of key words, themes and data "chunks." The use of positive and negative weights across the themes, the informant's use of modifiers, and when the use of modifiers occurred, i.e., in response to which questions, were then compared and contrasted. Finally, the interview was analyzed as a whole in the context of Mr. Smith's occupational and organizational alliances and briefly related to theory relevant to the interview's outcomes.

Following collection of the structural observations, a short summary of overall impressions was written by the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 51). Like the microcultural data analysis, the fieldnotes of the study were marked, coded and indexed, and the data were placed into matrices. Again, the latter categories were broken down more specifically. The data were then analyzed separately for Mr. Smith and Ms. Kawasaki in order to determine their individual roles in the tutoring relationship and the behaviors that formed patterns across both observations; role content, behaviors, process, and affect. Next, the data were analyzed for assigned/assumed functions and responsibilities and these findings related to theory and research. Finally, inferences were made about Mr. Smith and Ms. Kawasaki's feelings about their duties and values in a larger social structure as evidenced by roles they played in the context of the tutoring sessions.

All of the data analysis methods contributed to the creation of a conceptual framework of the study explained in the conclusions area of this report. I believe that triangulation through use of the three methods (microcultural participant observation, ethnographic interview, and structural role analysis), as well as intersubjective agreement helped to ensure the validity of the data and its presentation in this report. Informal follow-up data primarily taking the form of facts relating to the history and context of the tutoring arrangement were not analyzed except as they provided information not obtained in the methods above.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

Ethnographic methodology uses the researcher as the research instrument. As such, I assumed that I was capable, as a research instrument, to enter the field and take on a role that allowed the data to emerge. My further assumption as a researcher was that this topic of study was worthwhile and that the informants provided information that is of interest to the reader and the researcher. It was also assumed that the informant, Mr. Smith, would be willing to talk about his experiences, would be comfortable talking with the researcher, and that his voicing would be a valid representation of his experiences. Finally, it was assumed that Mr. Smith had been cognizant of differences between his native culture and that of Japanese culture.

By using ethnographic research methodology, I as a researcher assumed that there were distinct patterns that could be observed and studied in individuals belonging to different native cultural groups. This use also assumed that the patterns that emerged might be characteristic of the larger culture, although one is not able to generalize to whole cultures simply by investigating the interactions between two people.

Presentation of the Data

The cross-cultural learning environment was studied through: (a) physical patterns: layout of the setting and objects used; the human setting, the tutor and the adult learner, their relationship to the physical setting, and the scheduling involved, (b) the environment's formal structure: history of the tutelage and evaluation of tutors by Mr. Smith's company, (c) the tutoring/learning environment: a typical session, Ms. Kawasaki's typical behavior patterns and teaching methods, and Mr. Smith's typical behavior patterns, and (d) the cognitive patterns that emerged: definition of good instruction, Mr. Smith's expectations of the tutoring, how these were communicated to Ms. Kawasaki, and if they were met; perceptions of culture gained, and the relationship between Mr. Smith and Ms. Kawasaki. Each of these areas will be explored below.

Physical Patterns

In order to fully understand the cross-cultural learning experience being studied, it was necessary to learn of the historical background of Mr. Smith and Ms. Kawasaki. It was also important to put the learning experience into the context of the environment in which it was conducted, namely Mr. Smith's company, FourStar*. FourStar is a large midwestern United States-based multinational corporation, an "organization active in several countries but in which there is one dominant 'home' national culture to which most key decision makers of the organization belong" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 271). FourStar is based in the city in which Mr. Smith's office is located, although his office is not in the company's headquarters. The tutoring sessions were held in FourStar's company offices, and this is where the participant observations were performed. The tutoring session room itself was small and rather stark, the walls bare of decoration, and the only furniture a table with three chairs around it, a desk with chair, and a telephone on top of the desk. The building paging system could be heard clearly from inside the room; this and the telephone ringing were the only interruptions to the tutoring sessions. Materials used in the tutoring sessions included a pair of Japanese language textbooks and Mr. Smith's additional use of a Japanese dictionary, notepad and pen.

Mr. Smith's tutoring sessions were generally held on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9 a.m. until 10 a.m. If Mr. Smith or Ms. Kawasaki had a conflict with a particular date, a mutually agreed upon substitute date was arranged or the session canceled. Mr. Smith is a polymer physicist and mechanical engineer who works in the corporation's molding technology center, a research and development area that serves all of the corporation's divisions. His work also involves conducting research in cutting edge technology in his discipline. These activities cause him to be a frequent traveler, both in the United States and abroad. Mr. Smith is in his forties and describes himself as "a very process-oriented problem solver."

Ms. Kawasaki was born and spent the majority of her life living in her native country of Japan. She is now in her late forties or early fifties and has lived for the last fifteen years in the United States. She and her husband both received green cards one year after arriving in the United States. Ms. Kawasaki has taught Japanese (as a tutor) for FourStar for five years. She also teaches Japanese at a midwestern United States Japanese school for students who must retain Japanese while in the United States. In addition to these pursuits, Ms. Kawasaki teaches Japanese tutors in "how to tutor."

The Formal Structure of the Environment

Information regarding the environment's formal structure was obtained by informal discussion with Mr. Smith as well as through analysis of interview data. Mr. Smith took "language classes" (his description of the tutoring sessions) for about four months in the last quarter of 1996 in preparation for a business trip to Japan which lasted from January through April 1997. In preparation for another trip to Japan in March 1998, he began to retake Japanese classes based on the same twice a week schedule, beginning about one month prior to the first observation. Expectations of Ms. Kawasaki are determined individually by Mr. Smith and another colleague of his who is also receiving tutoring lessons from her. They are the only ones who evaluate their individual tutelage and its outcomes. "FourStar and myself," said Mr. Smith, "are focused on reducing non-value activities." Implicit in this statement is Mr. Smith's evaluation of his tutelage as a valuable activity.

Tutoring/Learning Environment

The typical tutoring session began with brief greetings of "Ohiyo gozaimas" (Good morning) between Mr. Smith and Ms. Kawasaki. The session then typically flowed without interruption with the subject matter the focus of attention until the hour was over and brief good-byes shared. Then the participants would file out into the hallway, Mr. Smith leading, followed by Ms. Kawasaki. Mr. Smith would continue on down the hallway, presumably to his office, and Ms. Kawasaki would sign herself out at the security desk and leave the building.

Mr. Smith used the formal suffix of "san" to introduce Ms. Kawasaki ("Kawasaki-san"), called her by this name on the phone, and referred to her in the tutoring sessions in the same way. She did not call him by any name at all. Use of the formal "san" and not "sansie," the Japanese formality for "teacher," implied some level of formality in the sessions, but not as much as could be used. The use of "san" by Mr. Smith contrasted somewhat with the casualness of the typical session. This casualness was demonstrated by both Mr. Smith and Ms. Kawasaki being dressed more casually than business formal, and the sessions lacking the appearance of a formal structure. In contrast to the casualness of the session structure was Ms. Kawasaki's assumed behavioral role, shown through her posture and body language. She remained in an erect, correct posture prior to, during, and after the close of the sessions. This body posture, though open, had few fluctuations. Fluctuations that did occur were either those based on lesson activity (paging through the textbook or standing to assist Mr. Smith to locate a term in his dictionary, for example) or in response to Mr. Smith's encroachment on her personal space (generally kept to about two feet). These movements were all characteristically close to her body and relatively small. Direct eye contact between Mr. Smith and Ms. Kawasaki was a rarity, and when it did occur, it was very brief in duration. Mr. Smith assumed a dominant (classical male) role in process behaviors associated with Ms. Kawasaki; he led when they walked down the hall, he chose the session topics most of the time, and he signed the log book that documented their lessons. Ms. Kawasaki assumed a positive affective role by showing only positive emotion, affirming the correct use of Japanese by Mr. Smith, and seldom using negative comments. She also assumed a non-dominant role in process behaviors, such as following rather than leading, coaching versus directing, asking for consensus, and maintaining the documentation log book.

Ms. Kawasaki's dominant teaching methods appeared to be coaching and role modeling. Throughout the sessions, Mr. Smith would either read out loud from his textbook, construct sentences in Japanese using the textbook as a guide, ask Ms. Kawasaki for assistance with correspondence to and from Japanese business associates, or carry on a free-flow conversation with Ms. Kawasaki in Japanese. Many times, the sessions incorporated more than one of these elements. There was a consistent pattern throughout the sessions: Mr. Smith speaking a phrase or sentence and Ms. Kawasaki repeating the corrected phraseology or sentence, emphasizing the corrected area by stressing the syllable or diction. Coaching also took the form of answering the many questions of Mr. Smith and giving positive, supportive feedback such as "Hai!" (yes!), nodding, or smiling. More elaborate compliments on Mr. Smith's progress were less frequent in occurrence. Ms. Kawasaki seldom used negatively loaded comments, and only displayed positive emotions. Very rarely did Ms. Kawasaki herself use questioning as a teaching method or take a directive approach, however, she did occasionally encourage Mr. Smith to study his Japanese!

Mr. Smith assumed a role in the tutoring sessions of an active learner. His conversation during the tutoring sessions focused either on discussion of the subject matter or in questioning Ms. Kawasaki about the subject matter. He also took the initiative to seek out other references for assistance, i.e., his Japanese dictionary. On occasion, Mr. Smith ruminated negatively about his performance, although laughter came easily to him in the sessions as well. Throughout the sessions, he displayed a broad range of emotion: frowning, smiling, laughing, sighing, groaning, shaking his head. While reading out loud, he stressed syllables in a fashion similar to that of Ms. Kawasaki. He wrote notes to himself and had his Japanese dictionary nearby, which he used occasionally. During Mr. Smith's interview, he had this to say about his learning style and constraints:

> Study lessons are most optimized when carried out to combine both verbal usage as well as some form of visual stimuli—writing things down or highlighting, or taking time to verbalize what is read...makes lessons to be retained in memory although the pronunciation may not necessarily be correct...I should study more. My biggest complaint is the lack of adequate textbooks. The language is complicated and it is difficult to find good, reasonably inclusive texts.

Perhaps the most interesting difference between Ms. Kawasaki's behavior and Mr. Smith's was in their respective use of personal space. Mr. Smith tended to use space at will, opening his arms wide, waving ("talking with") his hands, moving from close to the table to learning away from it. These gestures, along with fidgeting such as wiggling his feet, seemed very comfortable to him. Most often he assumed an open body position, but on

occasion he used a closed one, drawing himself near to his text and placing one arm with his head resting on it between himself and Ms. Kawasaki. This seemed to occur when he was engaged in deep thought, and was typically combined with a frowning countenance and non-direct eye contact.

Cognitive Processes

During the interview with Mr. Smith, he commented that, "Ms. Kawasaki is a very good teacher. She is very encouraging." When pressed by the question, "What makes her a good teacher?" Mr. Smith stated,

> She is very familiar with her language and is still learning English. So to be able to teach a language one must know grammatical structure—she's able to explain her language in a grammatical sense because that's how she's learned English. Since she is learning English skills using an English format she is able to describe Japanese in the same format; subject, predicate, adjective...

In response to the prompt, "You state that she is also 'very encouraging.' What specifically does she do that encourages you?" Mr. Smith replied,

> What I mean is she frequently interjects, 2-3 times per lesson, an encouraging statement when I happen to do something right or when my statements are well prepared.

When probed, "What kinds of things does she interject, can you give me examples?" He responded,"She says 'josu desnay,' which means, 'Good job, you rookie!' <pause> No, which means 'good job.' I couldn't be happier with the quality of tutor I have."

Mr. Smith's answers defined "goodness" in instruction as the capability to have command not only of the subject matter, but also to be able to communicate the subject matter effectively while positively reinforcing the learner.

Mr. Smith had high expectations of his tutelage. While he noted that foreign language studies are pursued by people for reasons that "vary from an essential use of one's attributes to purely entertainment," he also stated that studying Japanese would allow him to "conduct rudimentary conversations in Japanese" during his travels to Japan. When asked if his tutelage had met his expectations prior to his 1997 trip to Japan. "Absolutely, it was helpful," he stated. He went on to say:

> It was necessary for me to navigate daily living routines singularly. The environment where I lived really required me to <pause> (sigh) to know at least fundamental aspects of the language—and this was only talking—I never did learn how to use my washing machine! I lived in an apartment building with no English speaking people. Most of the restaurant people spoke very little English. Same with most other modes of accomplishing daily tasks such as getting on the train, buying groceries...I was able to communicate on a minimalistic level even when I traversed the island.

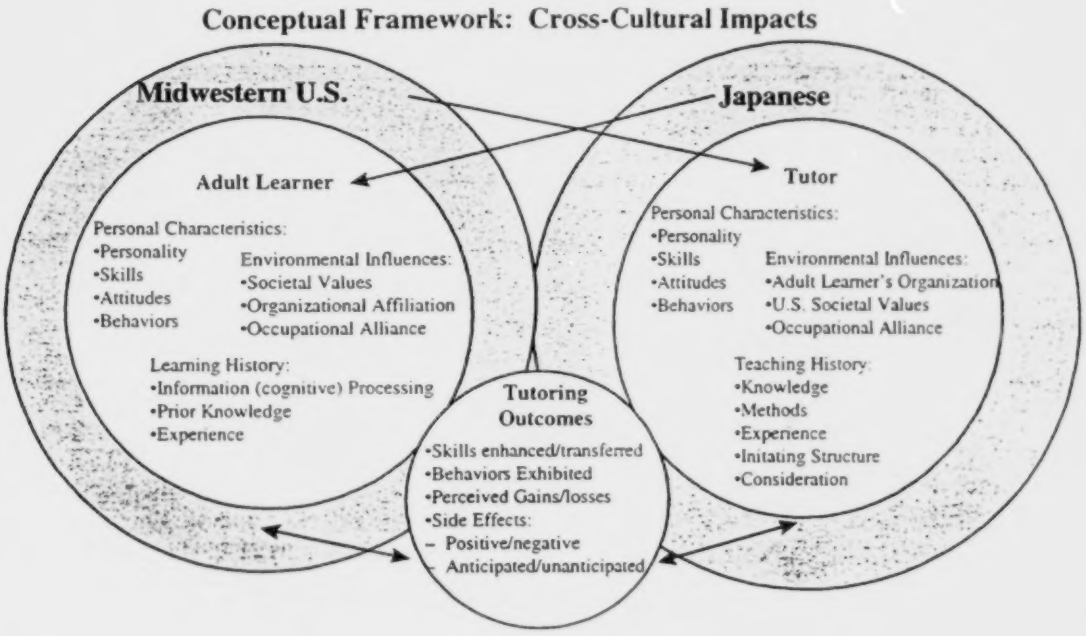
In most of his other responses to interview questions, Mr. Smith responded with sentence structures strewn with lengthy chains of prepositional phrases and heavy use of modifiers. Mr. Smith's responses to questions regarding his evaluation of the tutelage were unique in that they did not involve this same use of modifiers. The above quote of "Absolutely, it was helpful" is relatively clean and simple in contrast to Mr. Smith's other responses. His evaluative responses were also positively weighted. This may mean that Mr. Smith was more emphatically positive about these thoughts and verbalizations.

Did Mr. Smith gain any impressions about Japanese culture from his sessions with Ms. Kawasaki prior to his travel to Japan? Mr. Smith's answer to this interview question was negatively weighted and concise when he responded that "I was just learning another language. I didn't think anything special." If the same logic is applied, the very concise nature of these comments and their negative weight would imply that Mr. Smith was emphatic in the belief that he was not aware of any gained insights about Japan after working with Ms. Kawasaki.

Conclusions and Conceptual Framework

Any time a learning environment is created, an opportunity exists for the individuals involved to have differing cultural backgrounds. In attempting to relate the information gathered from this study to the larger social context, the framework illustrated below was conceptualized. Expanding the framework to a greater than 1:1 ratio could be accomplished by adding a sphere for each person involved in the educational environment. For simplicity sake, the framework will be described using this research as an example. The framework takes as a starting point the native

cultural background of the parties involved, in this case, Ms. Kawasaki and Mr. Smith. Hofstede's cultural dimensions are an example of theory and research that may be used to describe the general native cultural background of the individuals or groups involved, as done in this report. The individual or group is then assessed as a part of that culture, and described broadly within its parameters, remembering that generalizing national culture to an individual is an ecological fallacy.



Next, the individual's role as learner(s) or instructor within his/her or their native culture is researched as well as how that role may be changed or need to be altered to fit the cultural environment of the learning setting. For my example, this would involve trying to understand Ms. Kawasaki's role, along with its requisite knowledge and skills, as it would be held in her native Japan. One would examine the particular instructional methods that Ms. Kawasaki might use, thereby forming an impression of how she might initiate structure into the tutoring sessions and how she might give consideration to her learners. Mr. Smith's role as learner would be examined using Knowles' adult learning theory as a guide, allowing for differences given the FourStar culture (organizational affiliation) and Mr. Smith's occupation. The content of the tutoring sessions lent itself well to a participative learning environment such as Knowles found beneficial to adult learning. In allowing Mr. Smith to raise questions and in using an unstructured format, Ms. Kawasaki allowed Mr. Smith to be in charge of his own learning.

Finally, the individual's background is studied to obtain information regarding past history, personal characteristics and environmental influences. An example of this occurs in Mr. Smith's case, where it was necessary to discover what knowledge he had of Japanese prior to the observations of his learning environment, any experience he had with the language, and how he cognitively processed information in order to assess his learning. It was also important to establish an understanding of his personality, his skills, his attitudes and his behaviors while in the learning setting, as well as the societal values, organizational affiliation, and occupational alliances that all contributed to shape who he was as a learner. Mr. Smith described himself as a "process oriented problem solver." His need for control over a "problem" and his affinity for process were displayed when conducting the interview with him. Mr. Smith was told that the interview would be very open and not characterized by a lot of structure. His response was that he had expected a *very structured* interview. Over the course of the interview, Mr. Smith seemed relaxed and used open body language but his comfort at the time was probably quite low, and the lack of structure of

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the interview intimidating. Therefore it was difficult to follow his natural logic as he did not talk freely without being questioned. In the tutoring sessions, Mr. Smith also showed a preference for structure by assuming the role of an active learner: he was able to impose his own structure onto the sessions and eliminate any possible uncertainty. How did Ms. Kawasaki respond to his problem solving, process-oriented learning style? She conducted tutoring sessions that were stable, but not highly programmed. The sessions were also at times jointly planned by Ms. Kawasaki and Mr. Smith, and this fits the collective decision making model suggested by Knowles. Adapting instructional structure and consideration to fit the learner's needs such as Ms. Kawasaki did in this case for Mr. Smith is crucial for learning success.

The arrows drawn from the largest spheres (Japanese culture and Midwestern U.S. culture) serve to illustrate the transfer of cultural knowledge and perception one gains about another culture from being involved in a cross-cultural learning environment. Although Mr. Smith stated that he had not formed any impressions about Japan from Ms. Kawasaki, there may have been subconscious perceptions or assumptions he drew from her; just she may have formed impressions or assumptions of midwestern United States culture from her interactions with Mr. Smith.

The outcomes of the educational environment may be skill enhancement or transfer, exhibited behaviors, perceived gains or losses from the experience, and side effects, either positive/negative or anticipated/unanticipated. Mr. Smith stated in his interview that he enjoyed his tutoring sessions and was learning much from them, and that he felt he was in charge of his learning. Mr. Smith's continued work with the Japanese and his upcoming trip back to Japan caused him to have a vested interest in the outcome of his Japanese lessons. The final assessment of Mr. Smith's learning will occur when he is in Japan; he will be able to judge not only Ms. Kawasaki's effectiveness as a Japanese language tutor, but his success as an adult learner as well. For this reason, the outcome sphere on the model was drawn to overlap both Japanese and midwestern U.S. cultures.

This study sought to describe cross-cultural impacts on tutoring in an organizational setting. It was concluded by presenting a conceptual framework for the study and for future reference and use. The researcher's hope is that this study has preserved and dignified ethnographic methodology in the process.

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